

IMPACT



NO. 11

OCT-NOV

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SHOCK

SUSPENSTORIES

**JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**



THOMAS
CRAIG

MELVIN?
YOU SAY YOU
CAN'T FIND
MAD
ANYWHERE?

B. ELDER

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Shock Suspense Stories, Oct.-Nov., 1953—Vol. 1, No. 11. Published Bi-Monthly by Tiny Tot Comics, Inc., at 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y. William M. Gaines, Managing Editor, Albert B. Fuldstein, Editor. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. One year subscription in the U. S. 60¢ plus 15¢ for packing and mailing—total 75¢. Elsewhere \$1.00. Entire contents copyrighted 1953 by Tiny Tot Comics, Inc. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped return envelope. No similarity between any of the characters, names or persons appearing in this magazine with any of those living or dead is intended, and any such similarity is purely coincidental. Printed in U. S. A.

THE TRYST!



SHE WAS FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, WITH A YOUTHFUL BEAUTY, A CHILDLIKE INNOCENCE THAT FLOORED HIM. ALL HIS LIFE JOHN HENDRICKS HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE **COMPLETELY PURE**, SOMEONE COMPLETELY **UNSULLIED BY LIFE... AND BY MEN!** IN FASCINATION, HE LISTENED AS SHE SPOKE...

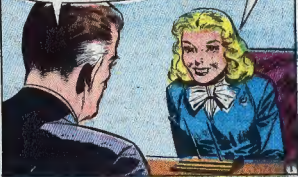
...I RECEIVED THE HIGHEST MARKS IN MY CLASS! AND I'LL WORK HARD... **REALLY!** I'M SURE I COULD MAKE YOU AN EFFICIENT SECRETARY IF YOU'LL ONLY GIVE ME A **CHANCE!**



JULIE ADAMS FINISHED HER LITTLE SPEECH AND SAT NERVOUSLY, GAZING INTO HER LAP. JOHN HENDRICKS SUDDENLY REALIZED HE HAD BEEN STARRING AT HER AND ROUSED HIMSELF...

I HAD BEEN **HOPING** TO FIND A SECRETARY WITH SOME...ER... **EXPERIENCE!** HOWEVER, I'M SURE YOU'LL DO NICELY! MISS ADAMS... YOU'RE **HIRED!**

OH, MR. HENDRICKS, I'M SO **THRILLED!** YOU WON'T BE SORRY... I **PROMISE** YOU!



JOHN HENDRICKS HAD NEVER DREAMED ANY GIRL COULD COME TO MEAN SO MUCH TO HIM IN SO SHORT A TIME. SHE DOMINATED HIS EVERY THOUGHT, AND FIRED A RAGING JEALOUSY WHEN HE SAW HER WITH ANYONE ELSE...

MR. COWLES, I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO MAKE MISS ADAMS' DESK A SPOT FOR SOCIALITIES! REMEMBER...THIS IS A BUSINESS OFFICE!

OH...YES, SIR! I'M SORRY, MR. HENDRICKS!



HE MOVED JULIE INTO HIS PRIVATE OFFICE WHERE HE COULD BE CERTAIN THE OFFICE WOLVES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DESTROY HER PURITY. BUT EVEN THEN...

I'D LIKE TO LEAVE NOW, MR. HENDRICKS! I HAVE A DATE TONIGHT!

A DATE? ER...WHY... I, AH...I'M VERY SORRY, MISS ADAMS, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO CALL IT OFF! I... I JUST REMEMBERED SOME IMPORTANT WORK THAT MUST BE DONE TONIGHT!



IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE, JOHN DID ALL HE COULD TO KEEP HER FROM OTHER MEN...TO KEEP HER AS CLEAN AND WHOLESOME AS HE WANTED HER TO BE...FOR HIMSELF! AND HE WORRIED DEEPLY...

JULIE, MY JULIE! I MUST PROTECT YOU FROM YOUR OWN INNOCENCE! NO ONE MUST SPOIL YOU! NO ONE!



HE KNEW SHE WAS SO NAIVE THAT ANY FAST-TALKING MAN WOULD FIND HER EASY PREY, AND HE WANTED TO SAVE HER FROM SUCH A FATE...

...I CAN'T MAKE HER WORK LATE EVERY NIGHT! AND WHAT ABOUT WEEKENDS? THERE MUST BE A WAY...



HE COULD THINK OF BUT ONE WAY... ONLY ONE SURE METHOD...

ER...JULIE. I HOPE YOU WON'T THINK ME TOO FORWARD... BUT...WOULD YOU HAVE DINNER WITH ME TONIGHT?

WHY, MR. HENDRICKS! I'D BE DELIGHTED!



HE HAD TO MAKE SURE THAT HE WAS ALWAYS WITH HER...HE HAD TO MONOPOLIZE HER EVERY MINUTE!

I...I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO GO DANCING TONIGHT! AND TOMORROW NIGHT WE COULD SEE A SHOW!

OH, IT SOUNDS WONDERFUL!



EVERY WEEKEND HE TOOK HER FAR FROM THE CITY...FAR FROM ANY SIGHT OF OR CONTACT WITH MEN...



HE WAS MADLY IN LOVE! EVERY IDEALISTIC DREAM HE EVER HAD ABOUT WOMEN WAS EMBODIED IN THE LOVELY YOUNG GIRL NAMED JULIE; HE WANTED TO MARRY HER... HE *HAD* TO MARRY HER, TO KEEP HER FOR HIMSELF!

...AND DO YOU, JULIET ADAMS, TAKE THIS MAN FOR YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBAND?

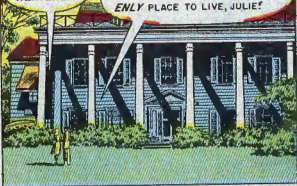
I DO!



IT WAS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEIR HONEYMOON THAT JOHN BROUGHT JULIE TO LIVE AT HIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY ESTATE, SURROUNDED BY MILES OF WOODLANDS...AND COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM ANY MEN...

OH, JOHN...IT'S HEAVENLY!

IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT AN ANGEL LIKE YOU SHOULD HAVE A HEAVENLY PLACE TO LIVE, JULIE!



ANYTHING YOU COULD EVER WANT OR NEED, IS HERE! I...I WANT YOU TO PROMISE NEVER TO LEAVE THE ESTATE UNLESS I'M WITH YOU!

WHY...OF COURSE, DARLING! ANYTHING YOU SAY!



YOU'RE SUCH A TREASURE, JULIE! I...I'D DIE IF... IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU!

YOU'RE SWEET, JOHN... SO VERY SWEET!



JOHN'S ENTIRE WORLD HAD BEEN CHANGED BY THE ENTRANCING, EVER-YOUTHFUL JULIE. BUT SHE GRADUALLY BECAME LONELY, ALONE ON THE HUGE ESTATE...

DARLING...

YES, DEAR?



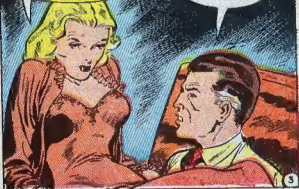
DARLING...BELIEVE ME, I'M *VERY* HAPPY, BUT... I'M *ALONE* SO MUCH. YOU'RE IN THE CITY, ALL DAY, AND I NEVER SEE OR SPEAK TO ANYONE, I'M NOT COMPLAINING... *HONEST!* IT'S JUST THAT...WELL, I GET LONESOME SOMETIMES!

I...I KNOW, JULIE! BUT...WELL, WHAT CAN I DO?



I DON'T MIND NEVER LEAVING THE ESTATE. BUT I THOUGHT... MAYBE IF I HAD SOMETHING TO...TO KEEP ME *BUSY*... LIKE, MAYBE A *BABY*?

WHAT!? A *BABY*?! NO! NO, I...I DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANY CHILDREN! IT...IT WOULD *SPOIL* YOU FOR ME!



JULIE SAID NO MORE ABOUT IT, AND JOHN THOUGHT THE MATTER WAS FORGOTTEN. THEN, SOME WEEKS LATER...

JOHN! WHAT ON EARTH IS THE MATTER?

MR. FARNSWORTH, ONE OF MY BIGGEST CLIENTS, IS COMING TO VISIT US TONIGHT! HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN HAVE GONE TO EUROPE, AND HE'S LONELY! WHY, HE PRACTICALLY FORCED ME TO ASK HIM OVER! I COULDN'T REFUSE!

TO JULIE, THIS WAS AS EXCITING AS HER WEDDING DAY! SHE FAIRLY BUBBLED OVER WITH HAPPINESS AS SHE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO MR. FARNSWORTH'S CHATTER...

YES...NOTHING LIKE CHILDREN TO MAKE A HOUSE A HOME! THEY KEEP YOU YOUNG, TOO! THAT'S YOUR TROUBLE, JOHN! NO CHILDREN! HA! WHY DON'T YOU TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT, JULIE? HA!

MR. FARNSWORTH VISITED THEM ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, AND JOHN HAD TO STRUGGLE DESPERATELY TO CONTROL HIS SEETHING JEALOUSY...

YOU LOOK LOVELIER THAN EVER, TONIGHT, JULIE, MY DEAR!

WHY, THANK YOU, MR. FARNSWORTH!

AND SEVERAL TIMES THE TALKATIVE MR. FARNSWORTH WOULD BRING UP THE DELICATE SUBJECT...

NO CHILDREN, JOHN? YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER, YOU KNOW!

ER...NOT YET, SIR! MAYBE... SOON!

AND SEVERAL TIMES, AFTER MR. FARNSWORTH HAD RETURNED HOME...

...BUT I'M A WOMAN, JOHN! I WANT TO BE A MOTHER! I...I WANT A CHILD... BADLY!

NO, JULIE! NO! I WON'T HEAR OF IT! PLEASE DON'T ASK ANYMORE!

EXTREMELY DOWNHEARTED, JULIE SAID NO MORE. SHE TURNED AND SILENTLY LEFT THE ROOM, LEAVING JOHN ALONE WITH HIS AGONY. THOUGH HE WOULDN'T ADMIT IT, HE DIDN'T WANT CHILDREN BECAUSE HE COULDN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF ANYONE SHARING HER LOVE...

JULIE...OH, MY JULIE! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

IT WAS A FEW WEEKS LATER THAT JOHN BECAME AWARE OF A FACT THAT STARTLED HIM...

THERE GOES JULIE RUNNING OFF INTO THE WOODS! HMM... THIS IS THE SECOND SATURDAY THAT SHE...

HE WAITED UNTIL SHE RETURNED,
HOURS LATER, FROM THE WOODS...

SHE'S BEEN MEETING FARNSWORTH!
SHE'S FALLEN FOR HIM BECAUSE HE
LIKES CHILDREN! IT *HAS* TO BE
HIM! SHE DOESN'T *KNOW* ANY
OTHER MEN!



DAYS LATER, AT JOHN'S OFFICE...

OH, HELLO, MR. FARNSWORTH! WHY
CERTAINLY! WE'D BE *GLAD* TO
HAVE YOU FOR DINNER TONIGHT!
ABOUT EIGHT O'CLOCK? FINE!



BUT EARLY THAT EVENING, WHILE
MR. FARNSWORTH WAS FINISHING
SOME WORK BEFORE VISITING JOHN'S
HOME...

WHA...WHO'S
THERE?!



IN A FURIOUS ASSAULT, JOHN POUNDED AND BATTERED
MR. FARNSWORTH UNTIL HIS RAGING JEALOUSY WAS SPENT,
AND THE OLDER MAN LAY UNMOVING ON THE FLOOR...

THERE! THAT'LL TEACH
YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF MY WIFE!



LATER THAT NIGHT, BOTH HE AND JULIE PACED THE
FLOOR, BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS...

...BUT IT'S ALMOST
NINE-THIRTY, JOHN!
MR. FARNSWORTH
HAS NEVER BEEN
THIS LATE!

HMPH! SHE'S
WORRIED! JUST
WAIT TILL SHE
SEES TOMORROW'S
HEADLINES!

YOU'RE RIGHT,
JULIE! I GUESS
HE COULDN'T
MAKE IT! LET'S
GET SOME
SLEEP!



THE NEXT MORNING, JOHN HENDRICKS READ THE HEAD-
LINES, THEN HANDED THE PAPER TO HIS WIFE. HE WATCHED
HER FACE CLOSELY FOR ANY TELL-TALE EXPRESSION...

OH, GOOD HEAVENS, JOHN! IT SAYS
HERE THAT MR. FARNSWORTH WAS
MURDERED BY A *BURGLAR* LAST
NIGHT! ISN'T THAT AWFUL?



HE WAS SUCH A *GOOD* CLIENT
OF YOURS! IT WOULD BE A
SHAME IF THIS HURTS YOUR
BUSINESS IN ANY WAY! TSK!
SUCH A *NICE* OLD MAN!

ER...YES! YES...



THOUGH DISAPPOINTED WHEN HIS WIFE SHOWED NO SIGN OF DEEP GRIEF BECAUSE OF MR. FARNSWORTH'S DEATH, HE WAS ALSO PUZZLED BY HER CALM ACCEPTANCE OF IT UNTIL THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY...



FRANTICALLY, HE RACED OUT OF THE HOUSE, INTO THE WOODS... BUT SHE WAS NOWHERE IN SIGHT...



HE RETURNED TO THE HOUSE, THE TEARS OF ANGER ROLLING DOWN HIS CHEEKS...

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF SHE'S STILL MEETING SOME MAN, THEN... THEN MAYBE SHE NEVER MET FARNSWORTH AT ALL! DID I KILL THE WRONG MAN?!



...JULIE, I'LL NEVER LET ANYONE ELSE HAVE YOU! I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF ANOTHER MAN BEING NEAR YOU! I'LL KILL HIM, JULIE! I'LL FIND HIM... AND KILL HIM! I SWEAR IT!



AS USUAL, THE FOLLOWING WEEK, JULIE DISAPPEARED INTO THE TREES, WITH HER SMALL BASKET... BUT THIS TIME JOHN WAS TRAILING CLOSE BEHIND HER, AN UGLY GUN IN HIS POCKET...



SHE RAN LIGHTLY IN AND OUT AMONG THE TREES AND HE KEPT HER IN SIGHT ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY! HE KEPT TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF BELIEVE THAT HE WAS ALL *WRONG*... THAT IT WAS HIS *INSANE JEALOUSY* THAT CAUSED HIM TO THINK SUCH FILTHY THINGS ABOUT HIS PRECIOUS JULIE...



... BUT HE KNEW HE *HAD* BEEN RIGHT WHEN HE SAW HER REACH THE CREST OF A SMALL HILL. SHE STOOD MOTIONLESS FOR A MOMENT, THEN HAPPILY RAISED HER ARM, WAVING AND CALLING A GREETING TO THE SOMEONE OUT OF SIGHT BEYOND THE RISE...



THROUGH A STREAM OF TEARS, HE SAW HER BEGIN TO REMOVE HER BLOUSE AS SHE DISAPPEARED DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL TOWARD HER COMPANION! HE SLUMPED TO THE GROUND WEAKLY...



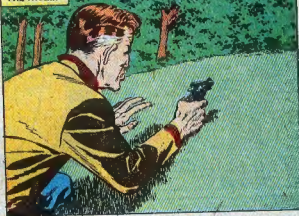
A LONG TIME LATER, HE SAW HER REAPPEAR AT THE HILL CREST, RADIANT AND SMILING, AND BUTTONING HER BLOUSE! SHE WAVED GOOD-BYE, BLEW A KISS FROM DAINTY FINGERTIPS AND HURRIED BACK TOWARD THE HOUSE, HER LITTLE BASKET SWINGING GAILY IN THE SUN. JOHN PICKED THE GUN UP FROM THE GROUND...



HE SAT THERE, SOBBING QUIETLY, LISTENING TO HER BUBBLING LAUGHTER FLOAT UP OVER THE HILL, WHILE HIDEOUS VISIONS OF WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE RACED THROUGH HIS MIND! THE LAUGHTER DIED, TO BE REPLACED BY INTERMINABLE, QUIET, BROKEN ONLY BY AN OCCASIONAL GIGGLE... A SQUEAL OF JOY...



THERE WERE NO TEARS NOW... ONLY HATRED! DEEP, VENOMOUS, MANIACAL HATRED! WITH THE GUN GRIPPED TIGHTLY, HE CROPT STEALTHILY TO THE TOP OF THE RISE...



HE CAUGHT A MOVEMENT BEHIND A CLUMP OF BUSHES! THROUGH THE LEAVES HE SAW THE COLOR OF FLESH AND HE AIMED THE GUN AND FIRED... AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN!



HE RAN HYSTERICALLY FROM THE HILL, BACK THROUGH THE TREES TO THE HOUSE! IT WAS OVER! JULIE WAS HIS AGAIN!



HE WAS EXHAUSTED AS HE NEARED THE HOUSE AND SAW JULIE...

OH, THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU! PLEASE, DEAR, WALK WITH ME! I... I HAVE... I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU!



SHE LED HIM BACK INTO THE WOODS. HE HESITATED AT FIRST, THEN WENT WITH HER! WHY NOT? HE HAD NOTHING TO FEAR...

I...I WANT TO **CONFESS** SOMETHING, JOHN! I KNOW I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BEHIND YOUR BACK... BUT, WELL... I COULDN'T **HELP** IT! YOU KNOW HOW **LONELY** I WAS!

A **CONFESS**ION. **FAT LOT** OF GOOD IT WILL DO HER. **LOVER!** JUST AS WELL IF THEY **DID** STUMBLE ON HIS BODY... **JULIE** WOULD BE A **GOOD WITNESS**...

IT...IT JUST **HAPPENED!** I WENT **SWIMMING** AT THE **POND** ONE DAY, AND THERE HE WAS? I LIKED HIM RIGHT AWAY! HE WAS SO **CUTE**...**CURLY HAIR**... **BLUE EYES!** YOU...YOU **UNDERSTAND**, DON'T YOU, JOHN?

... **MAYBE**, IF HE HAD TO...

YOU **KNOW** HOW **LONELY** I WAS! I **WANTED** SOMEONE...**ANYONE!** IT WAS **WRONG**...BUT WE **STARTED** TO **MEET** EVERY **SATURDAY**...

... HE COULD EVEN PUT THE **BLAME**...

I **DIDN'T WANT** TO DO IT BEHIND YOUR **BACK**... BUT THERE WAS NO **OTHER WAY!** I **KNOW** HOW... HOW **JEALOUS** YOU ARE!

... **ON JULIE!** WHAT A **LAUGH!**

... BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT FROM YOU ANY LONGER! YOU'VE A **RIGHT** TO **KNOW!** HE'S SO **WONDERFUL!** I **WANT** YOU TO **MEET** HIM!

HE AND I HAVE HAD SUCH **FUN**, **PICNICKING** AND **SWIMMING** TOGETHER! HIS NAME IS **TOMMY!** HE'S FROM THE **ORPHAN HOME** BEHIND YOUR **ESTATE!** I **KNOW** YOU'LL JUST **LOVE** HIM! AND... HE'S JUST **DYING** TO **MEET** YOU!

THE
END

in gratitude...

IT WAS AS IF A HUGE BLANKET HAD SUDDENLY FALLEN UPON THE CROWD THAT JAMMED THE STATION PLATFORM, MUSHING THEIR CLAMORING VOICES, STIFLING THEIR LAUGHTER. ALL EYES TURNED TO WHERE THE SHINING RAILS RAN AWAY TOWARD THE HORIZON AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE HAZE AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS. ALL EARS LISTENED TO THE FAINT WHISTLE OF THE APPROACHING TRAIN. AND THEN, IT WAS AS IF THE BLANKET WERE SUDDENLY LIFTED AGAIN. A BAND BEGAN TO PLAY. THE SHOUTING AND LAUGHTER EXPLODED AGAIN...LOUDER THIS TIME...

MARCIA AND ANDREW NORRIS, THE PARENTS, STOOD AMID THE CHEERING SHOUTING CROWD. THERE WERE TEARS OF JOY IN MRS. NORRIS'S EYES, AND MR. NORRIS'S FACE BEAMED...

HE'S COME HOME, ANDREW. OUR JOEY'S COME HOME...A HERO!

THE WHOLE TOWN'S PROUD OF HIM, MARCIA... THE WHOLE TOWN! LOOK AT 'EM...

HERE HE COMES! RIGHT ON TIME, TOO!

LET'S GIVE HIM THE BEST DARN WELCOMING THIS TOWN EVER HAD!

LET'S START WAVIN' THOSE FLAGS, FOLKS! LET'S REALLY PUT ON A SHOW FOR HIM!

WELCOME

THE TRAIN HISSED AND SNORTED AS IT STEAMED INTO THE STATION AND SQUEALED TO A STOP. THE CROWD YELLED AND WAVED AND PUSHED. THE BAND BLARED. SOMEBODY POINTED...SHOUTING...

THERE HE IS!

WELCOME HOME, JOEY!

JOEY!

MA! PA!

WOOD.

THE BOY SWUNG OFF THE TRAIN AND PUT OUT HIS ARMS AND HIS MOTHER RUSHED INTO THEM AND HE HELD HER CLOSE...



HIS FATHER STOOD BY, AWKWARDLY, WAITING, AS THE MOTHER KISSED AND KISSED HER RETURNED HERO SON. AND THEN...

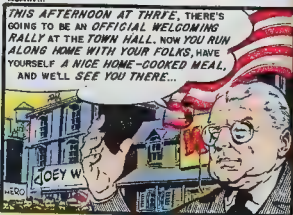
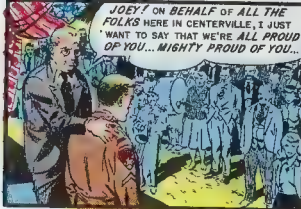


THE FATHER HELD OUT HIS RIGHT HAND. THE BOY RESPONDED AUTOMATICALLY... THEN HESITATED. THE FATHER STARED AT THE GLEAMING METAL CLAMP...



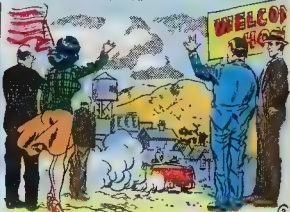
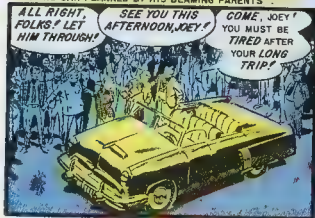
THE MAYOR PUT UP HIS HANDS AND THE BAND STOPPED PLAYING... THE CROWD QUIETED.

THE CROWD CHEERED. THE MAYOR HELD UP HIS HAND AGAIN...



THE BOY SMILED, WAVED TO THE CROWD, AND PICKED UP HIS BARRACKS BAG. THE CROWD PARTED AND HE MOVED TO THE WAITING CAR FLANKED BY HIS BEAMING PARENTS.

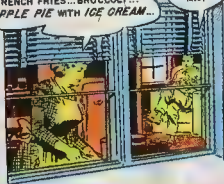
THE CAR DOOR SLAMMED. THE BAND BEGAN TO PLAY AGAIN. AND THE CROWD ROARED AS THEIR RETURNED HERO WAS WHISKED OFF...



MRS. NORRIS PUTTERED HAPPILY OVER THE KITCHEN STOVE, CHATTERING GAILY AND WIPING AWAY AN OCCASIONAL TEAR OF JOY...

I MADE EVERYTHING YOU LIKE, JOEY! ROAST BEEF... FRENCH FRIES... BROCCOLI... APPLE PIE WITH ICE CREAM...

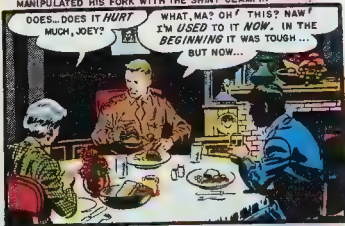
SOUNDS GREAT, MA!



THE PARENTS SAT QUIETLY, PICKING AT THEIR FOOD, WATCHING JOEY FEAST RAVENOUSLY, MARVELING AT THE WAY HE MANIPULATED HIS FORK WITH THE SHINY CLAMP...

DOES... DOES IT HURT MUCH, JOEY?

WHAT, MA? OH! THIS? NAW! I'M USED TO IT NOW. IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS TOUGH... BUT NOW...



THE BOY PUT DOWN HIS FORK ON THE EMPTY PLATE BEFORE HIM AND SAT BACK, SATED. HE LOOKED AROUND, GRINNING... DRINKING IN THE FAMILIAR SCENE... THE FAMILIAR SMELLS...

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME AGAIN, MA... PA!

IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME AGAIN, JOEY!



HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH...

IT'S TWO-FIFTEEN. WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TILL THE RALLY. I... I THINK I'D LIKE TO GO OUT TO HANK'S GRAVE FIRST!

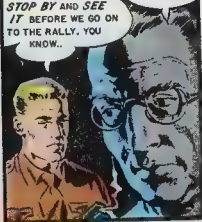
HANK'S... GRAVE?



THE PARENTS PALED. THE SON LOOKED AT THEM...

THAT'S RIGHT, PA! I'D KINDA LIKE TO STOP BY AND SEE IT BEFORE WE GO ON TO THE RALLY. YOU KNOW...

WHY... SURE, SON! SURE!

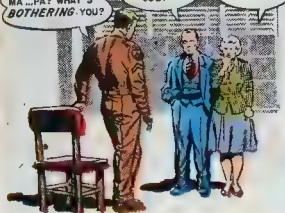


THE SON STOOD UP.

WHAT'S WRONG, MA... PA? WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU?

N-NOTHIN' JOEY!

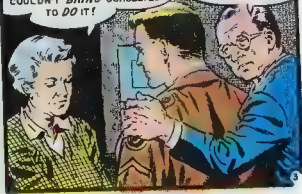
IT'S... IT'S JUST...



THE MOTHER TOOK HER SON'S HAND

WE MEANT TO WRITE YOU ABOUT IT, JOEY! WE MEANT TO TELL YOU! BUT WE... WE JUST COULDN'T BRING OURSELVES TO DO IT!

SIT DOWN, JOEY! YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW IT... NOW...



THE HERO SAT DOWN. HE LOOKED UP AT HIS PARENTS STANDING OVER HIM...



WHAT HAPPENED, PA? COULDN'T YOU SWING IT? DIDN'T HIS BODY GET HERE?

IT ISN'T THAT, SON! IT'S... IT'S...

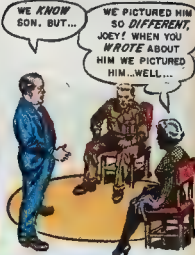
THE FATHER'S VOICE WAVED. THE MOTHER TOOK UP THE STORY...



ALL THOSE LETTERS YOU WROTE, JOEY! YOU NEVER MENTIONED IT! IT WASN'T FAIR! WE GREW TO LOVE HANK FROM YOUR LETTERS!

HE WAS MY BUDDY, MA! I LOVED HIM LIKE A BROTHER. WE WENT THROUGH IT ALL SIDE BY SIDE...

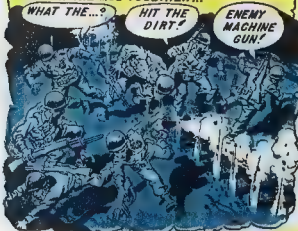
THE FATHER BEGAN AGAIN...



WE KNOW SON. BUT...

WE PICTURED HIM SO DIFFERENT, JOEY! WHEN YOU WROTE ABOUT HIM WE PICTURED HIM...WELL...

'WHEN YOU WROTE ABOUT THAT PATROL YOU WERE SENT ON, WE COULD JUST SEE YOU BOTH...TRAMPING THROUGH THE MUD TOGETHER...'



WHAT THE...?

HIT THE DIRT!

ENEMY MACHINE GUN!

'AND WHEN THE ENEMY MACHINE-GUN CUT YOUR PATROL OFF...PINNED IT DOWN, WE COULD JUST PICTURE YOU AND HANK VOLUNTEERING TO PUT IT OUT OF COMMISSION...AND CRAWLING OFF...'



KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN, FELLERS.

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF 'EM, LIEUTENANT!

BE RIGHT BACK, LIEUTENANT!

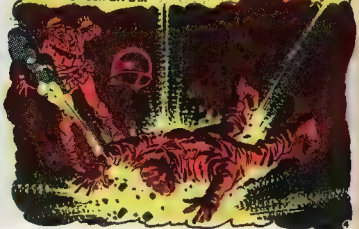
'WE WERE SO PROUD OF YOU BOTH, JOEY...TOSSING THOSE GRENADES...SILENCING THAT GUN...'

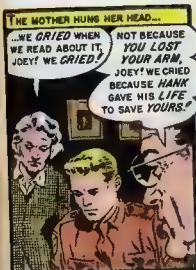


THAT DID IT, HANK!

LOOK OUT, JOEY!

'AND WHEN THE LIVE GRENADE LANDED BESIDE YOU AND HANK LEAPED UPON IT...COVERING IT WITH HIS BODY...SAVING YOUR LIFE...'

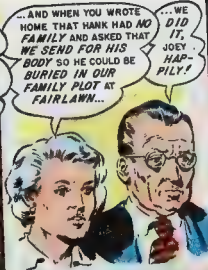




THE MOTHER HUNG HER HEAD...

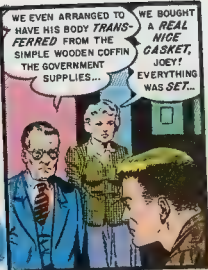
...WE GRIED WHEN WE READ ABOUT IT, JOEY! WE GRIED!

NOT BECAUSE YOU LOST YOUR ARM, JOEY! WE CRIED BECAUSE HANK GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE YOURS.



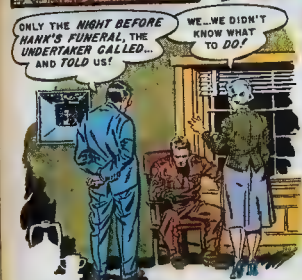
...AND WHEN YOU WROTE HOME THAT HANK HAD NO FAMILY AND ASKED THAT WE SEND FOR HIS BODY SO HE COULD BE BURIED IN OUR FAMILY PLOT AT FAIRLAWN...

...WE DID IT, JOEY. HAPPILY!



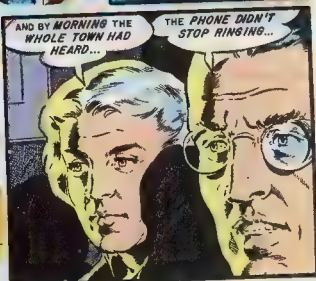
WE EVEN ARRANGED TO HAVE HIS BODY TRANSFERRED FROM THE SIMPLE WOODEN COFFIN THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIES...

WE BOUGHT A REAL NICE GASKET, JOEY! EVERYTHING WAS SET...



ONLY THE NIGHT BEFORE HANK'S FUNERAL, THE UNDERTAKER CALLED... AND TOLD US!

WE...WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!



AND BY MORNING THE WHOLE TOWN HAD HEARD...

THE PHONE DIDN'T STOP RINGING...



THE SOLDIER-HERO SAT THERE...STUNNED... LISTENING...

WE COULDN'T GO THROUGH WITH IT, JOEY! THE WHOLE TOWN WAS ON OUR NECKS, OUR FRIENDS-- THE FAMILY...

I HAD MY BUSINESS TO CONSIDER, SON. WE COULDN'T DO IT!

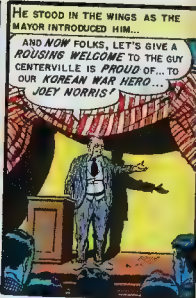


HE LOOKED UP, WHISPERING HOARSELY.

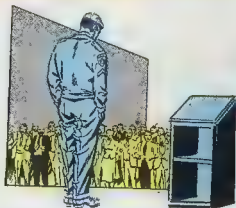
THEN...WHAT DID YOU DO?

WHY...WE BURIED HIM OVER IN GREENDALE...

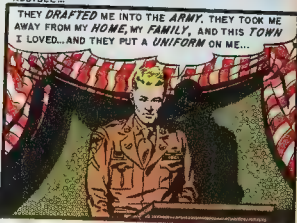
HE'S GOT A NICE PLOT, JOEY! PA BOUGHT HIM THE BEST. MORE THAN WE COULD AFFORD!



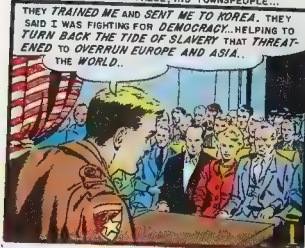
THE GATHERED CROWD THAT HAD COME TO HONOR JOEY - ROSE TO ITS FEET, APPLAUDING. JOEY STOOD BEFORE IT, HIS HEAD BOWED...



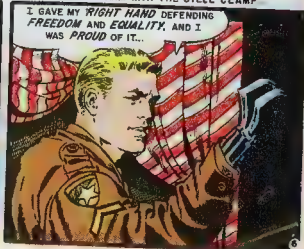
FINALLY, THE AUDITORIUM QUIETED DOWN, THEIR SOLDIER HERO BEGAN TO SPEAK. HIS VOICE WAS SCARCELY AUDIBLE...



HE LOOKED DOWN AT THESE, HIS TOWNSPEOPLE...



HE HELD UP HIS ARM WITH THE STEEL CLAMP



HIS VOICE LOWERED. HIS
FACE GREW GRIM...

I WAS PROUD, THAT IS,
UNTIL TODAY...

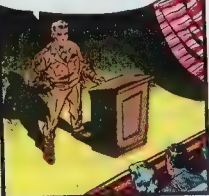


HE LOOKED FROM FACE TO FACE...

I HAD A BUDDY IN KOREA. WE ATE
TOGETHER...SLEPT TOGETHER...
LAUGHED TOGETHER...CRIED TOGETHER.
WE FOUGHT TOGETHER. WE FOUGHT
FOR DEMOCRACY TOGETHER...



HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THAT
CAUSE...AND HE SAVED MINE IN
DOING IT. HE THREW HIMSELF
ON A LIVE GRENADE...GOT
BLOWN UP...TO SAVE ME...



BUT WHEN HIS BODY WAS SENT
BACK HERE, IT WASN'T GOOD
ENOUGH TO BE BURIED IN FAIR-
LAWN CEMETERY. IT WASN'T
GOOD ENOUGH BECAUSE ITS
SKIN WASN'T THE RIGHT
COLOR...



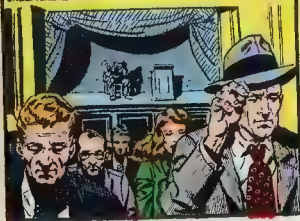
WELL, THE GRENADE THAT
TORE THAT SKIN TO PIECES
DIDN'T KNOW ITS COLOR...
DIDN'T CARE, IF IT WAS
WHITE OR BLACK...



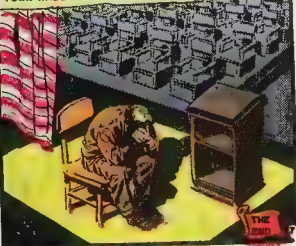
WHAT DID HE DIE FOR? WHAT DID
I GIVE MY ARM FOR? YOU SAY
YOU'RE PROUD OF ME. WELL,
I'M NOT PROUD OF YOU. I'M
ASHAMED! I'M ASHAMED OF
YOU...AND FOR YOU!



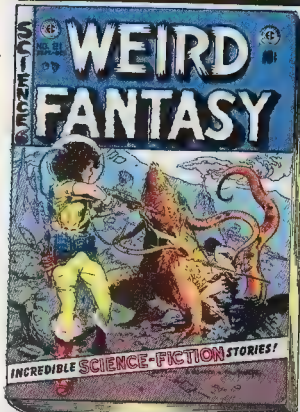
THE SOLDIER-HERO SAT DOWN. THERE WAS NO
APPLAUSE...NO CHEERS...NO BAND PLAYING. LITTLE
BY LITTLE, THE CROWD FILED OUT OF THE AUDITORIUM...
SHEEPSHLY... SILENTLY...



... LEAVING THE SOLDIER-HERO ALONE IN THE EMPTY
TOWN HALL. LEAVING HIM CRYING...



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DEADBEAT!



Dr. Curtis Clark drew his bathrobe tighter around his ample stomach and snorted angrily: "How long does your worthless brother intend to stay here and sponge off us?"

"N-Now, Curt," his wife mumbled from the big bed, "I'll see that Burt doesn't get in your way while he's here. If you'd only try to make allowances for him. He's so proud that you're one of the country's most eminent botanists..."

"Pfui!" rasped Dr. Clark. "He's nothing but a worthless bum who's never done a day's work in his life! Only reason he's visiting is to satisfy that bottomless pit he calls his stomach!"

Burt Devine tiptoed silently down the stairs and into the kitchen. With great care he flipped the light switch and moved across the room. An audible grunt came from him as he stopped in his tracks: that pompous brother-in-law of his had put a padlock on the refrigerator! What was a guy supposed to do when he hankered for a midnight snack? Burt moved toward the pantry and his hand closed around the doorknob. That crummy Clark, he thought to himself with disgust... he's even locked up the pantry! Not a speck of food around, and I'm starving to death after that stingy little snack they call dinner at this dump!

A thought struck Burt Devine and, switching off the kitchen light, he

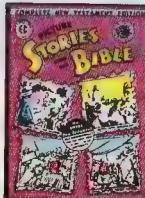
walked silently toward the rear of the house . . . to the glassed-in porch where Clark did his at-home experimenting. In the greenhouse, Burt reflected, he might find some tidbits left behind by his sister's cheap husband.

The door opened quietly and Burt stepped into the workroom: a quick search revealed nothing to eat. About to exit in disgust, Burt saw a wooden box set on a worktable. Closer examination brought a smile to his heavy face: his eyes lit up, his mouth gaped in a grin, the corners of his eyes crinkled with good humor. Digging his hands deep into the soil, he pulled up a fistful of the objects planted there.

"This is better than I hoped for," Burt rejoiced. "Just what I need to satisfy my craving for a late snack: MUSHROOMS! If there's anything I adore, it's a feast of luscious, tender, succulent mushrooms! Yum!"

And, suiting actions to word, Burt Devine proceeded to clean out the box. In a few minutes, smacking his lips with obvious delight, he closed the greenhouse door and tiptoed upstairs to his bedroom. What a laugh on stuffy old Clark!

Dr. Clark rose from the breakfast table. "First time in memory," he said, "that your brother missed a meal!" With that he strode toward the greenhouse, while his wife tidied up the kitchen. Within a minute Clark was back, his face crimson. "T-That special strain of TOADSTOOLS I've been working on," he spluttered, "t-they're all gone! Must've been dug up last night! I-I hope the dog didn't get in and eat them! Those toadstools are highly poisonous! One mouthful and . . . brrrr! I hate to think of the agony that will precede death within two hours of the time they're eaten!"



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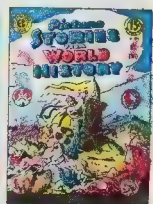


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SHOCK TALK

The only shocking thing about this column is that it's probably no shock! You've no doubt seen it two or three times in previous E.C. issues. But if n'ya haven't yet heard about E.C.'s new fan club, why read on!

Before launching into the sordid details of the club, however, we would like to sketch in a little background. We started out with two conditions that positively had to be met:

1) Our club would have to be a *different* kind of fan club... a continuously active club that would provide long-range interest, enjoyment and benefits for its members! And...

2) Our club would have to be a *non-profit* fan club! Incredible as it may seem, the only income we at E.C. derive... or care to derive!... from our efforts comes from the *newsstand* sales of our 10c mags. We actually *lose* a little on subscriptions, and make very little on the *annuals*... both are primarily offered as services to promote good will! If you readers want a fan club, we're more than happy to oblige... but, again, as a service, not for profit!

So here's what we've come up with...

1) **THE NAME:** As one reader wrote a while back, "E.C. magazines are habit-forming." So what could be more logical than to call the organization, "THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB"?

2) **THE SET-UP:** The E.C. Fan-Addict Club will consist of the national "parent" organization, and local chapters. *Everyone* who joins will be a member of the *national* organization. In addition, any group of five or more prospective members may join as an *authorized* chapter of the national organization. Each such chapter will be assigned a charter number. The name and address of the elected president of each authorized chapter will be made available to all members, so that those who are not already a member of a chapter will be able to join the one nearest them if they wish to.

3) **WHAT YOU GET:** Each member will receive a full-color 7½ by 10½ membership certificate, suitable for framing; a wallet-size membership identification card; a striking membership patch for sweaters, jackets, etc.;

and a very distinguished-looking membership pin!

4) **COST OF JOINING:** Membership in THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB will set you back two bits... 25c! This 25c represents the exact cost to us (plus or minus a fraction of a cent!) of one envelope, one stamp, and the above mentioned four items... certificate, card, patch, and pin! (The cost of Ruby's and Nancy's loving labor in packing and mailing is lovingly donated by E.C.)

5) **POSSIBLE FUTURE PLANS:** We are considering publishing an E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB BULLETIN, containing such features as national and local chapter news; advance inside information on new titles, future stories, and special issues, etc., articles and stories submitted by members; and a "back-issue trading post!" Only club members would be eligible to subscribe, with the price and frequency of publication yet to be decided upon.

We are also considering some sort of "E.C. Surprise-of-the-Month" plan for members. What the surprises might be, and what we might have to clip you for THIS one, is also as yet undetermined.

6) **IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED:** For an individual membership, send 25c, along with your clearly printed name and address, to:

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
Room 706
225 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

If five or more of you wish to join as an *authorized* chapter, enclose each member's name and address, along with 25c for each name, and indicate the name of the elected president. We will notify each president of his chapter's charter number... but each chapter member will receive his membership credentials, etc., individually.

So that's it! Meet new friends. Make new enemies. See the world. Spend money. Join THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!!!

(In honor of the occasion, we will forego the usual subscription plug that 6 issues of this, or any other E.C. mag, cost 75c.-ed.)

The SPACE SUITORS

IT WAS ALMOST TIME. WANDA TURNED AND LOOKED BACK ACROSS THE DESOLATE PEBBLED PLATEAU TO WHERE THE SHIP STOOD, TALL AND SILENT AND SILVERY... A MONUMENT TO LIFE IN A DEAD ATMOSPHERELESS WORLD. THEN SHE LOOKED DOWN AT MILTON, HER WEALTHY MIDDLE-AGED HUSBAND, KNEELING AWKWARDLY BEFORE HER IN HIS HEAVY RUBBER-RIBBED SPACE-SUIT, STUDYING THE SAMPLE OF PLANETOID ROCK. GOLD MILTON, AS EMPTY AND BARREN AS THIS WORLD THEY'D TRAVELED ACROSS THE VOID OF ENDLESS SPACE TO EXPLORE. AND THEN SHE LOOKED AT DONALD, HER HUSBAND'S YOUNG AND HANDSOME EMPLOYEE, STANDING BEHIND HER. *WARM* DONALD, VIBRANT AND EXCITING, WITH WHOM SHE'D PLANNED ALL THIS... WITH WHOM SHE'D PLANNED COLD MILTON'S *DEATH*...

WANDA STIFFENED. MILTON WAS GETTING UP, SLOWLY. IT WAS ALMOST TIME NOW. HE'D LOOKED AT THE ORE SAMPLES AND NOW HE KNEW... HE KNEW DON HAD LIED TO HIM. YES, IT WAS ALMOST TIME TO KILL HIM...



WANDA SHIVERED. EVEN THOUGH HER SPACE-SUIT WAS WEBBED WITH FINE WIRES THAT HEATED THE POCKET OF AIR BETWEEN ITS RIBBED SURFACE AND HER SMOOTH WHITE BODY, SHE SHIVERED. MILT STARED AT THE GUN DON HELD IN HIS GLOVED FIST...



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSE STORY

MILT LAUGHED. HIS LAUGHTER RASPED OVER THE INTERCOM, RINGING OUT OF THE TINY SPEAKER IN WANDA'S SPACE-HELMET...



WHAT'S SO FUNNY, MILT?

YOU TWO! YOU'VE BEEN SO CLEVER! WELL, I'VE BEEN CLEVERER!

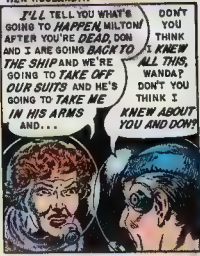
WANDA SCREAMED...



WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, DON? DON'T LISTEN TO HIM! HE'S TRYING TO STALL US! PULL THE TRIGGER...

YES, DON! PULL THE TRIGGER. KILL ME! SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

WANDA MOVED FORWARD, HATE BURNING IN HER EYES. SHE LEERED AT HER HUSBAND...



I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN, MILTON! AFTER YOU'RE DEAD, DON AND I ARE GOING BACK TO THE SHIP AND WE'RE GOING TO TAKE OFF OUR SUITS AND HE'S GOING TO TAKE ME IN HIS ARMS AND...

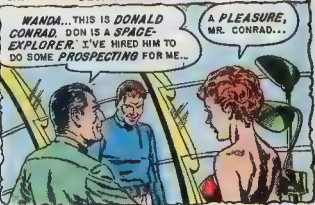
DON'T YOU THINK I KNEW ALL THIS, WANDA? DON'T YOU THINK I KNEW ABOUT YOU AND DON?



NO, MILTON. IF YOU KNEW, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE COME! YOU WOULDN'T HAVE WALKED INTO THIS TRAP!

YOU'RE WRONG, WANDA! I KNEW I'D LOST YOU! I KNEW IT THAT DAY DON CAME TO WORK FOR ME AND I SAW THAT HUNGER IN YOUR EYES...

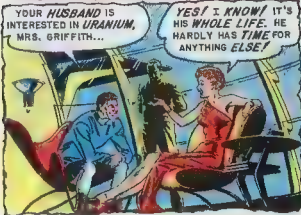
WANDA STARED AT MILTON. HER THOUGHTS WENT RACING WILDLY... BACK ACROSS THOSE TORTUROUS MONTHS... BACK ACROSS THOSE MONTHS OF LONGING AND FRUSTRATION... BACK TO THE BEGINNING...



WANDA... THIS IS DONALD CONRAD. DON IS A SPACE-EXPLORER. I'VE HIRED HIM TO DO SOME PROSPECTING FOR ME...

A PLEASURE, MR. CONRAD...

HAD SHE BEEN SO OBVIOUS? HAD MILTON ACTUALLY SEEN THE GLOW OF THE PASSION-FIRE THAT DON HAD STIRRED WITHIN HER?



YOUR HUSBAND IS INTERESTED IN URANIUM, MRS. GRIFFITH...

YES! I KNOW! IT'S HIS WHOLE LIFE. HE HARDLY HAS TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE!

WANDA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D THOUGHT ABOUT DON AFTER THAT, AND HOW THE FIRE WITHIN HER HAD LEAPED INTO A FLAMING INFERNO OF DESIRE...



IT WAS NICE OF YOU TO INVITE ME TO DINNER, WANDA!

MILT TOLD ME YOU WERE LEAVING TOMORROW, AND I THOUGHT WE'D GIVE YOU A NICE SEND-OFF...

SHE REMEMBERED THOSE STOLEN MOMENTS TOGETHER... OUT ON THE BALCONY... WHILE MILT WAS MIXING DRINKS...

PLEASE... TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, DON! I WOULDN'T WANT TO LOSE YOU NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU...

BABY...

...THE THRILL OF THEIR FIRST KISS... THE TEMPTING ENTREE TO THE FEAST OF LOVE THAT HAD TO FOLLOW...

OH, DON! I'VE LOVED YOU SINCE THE FIRST MOMENT I SAW YOU... LOVED YOU... AND WANTED YOU! MUST YOU GO TOMORROW?

I'VE GOT TO! BUT WHEN I GET BACK WE'LL... COUGH... WATCH IT! HE'S COMING!

...THOSE INTERMINABLE MONTHS OF WAITING UNTIL DON CAME BACK... THE TORTURE OF GREETING HIM AT THE ROCKET PORT... WITH MILT...

HI, FOLKS!

WELCOME BACK, DON! WELL, ANY LUCK?

...THE PAIN OF BEING SO NEAR HIM AND NOT BEING ABLE TO THROW HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS...

I FOUND A BONANZA, MILT! A PLANETOID LOADED WITH URANIUM-BEARING ORE...

GREAT! GREAT!

...THE WHISPERED PLEAS...

I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU, DARLING! TOMORROW, MILT WON'T BE HOME. COME UP ABOUT ELEVEN...

I'VE GOT A BETTER PLAN, WANDA. TRUST ME...

...LISTENING ALL THAT EVENING TO DON AND MILT TALKING BUSINESS... HUMMING... LONGING FOR THIS MAN...

...IT'S A LITTLE ATMOSPHERELESS PLANETOID OUTSIDE OF SOLAR SYSTEM X-5-19. OF COURSE, WE'LL HAVE TO WEAR SPACE-SUITS...

I'LL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO GO WITH YOU AND TAKE A LOOK...

...AND THEN, FINALLY, THAT SWEET MOMENT ALONE... THAT ONE OPPORTUNITY...

SWEETHEART! I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT YOU EVERY MINUTE THAT YOU WERE AWAY... WANTED YOU... DREAMED OF IT...

LISTEN! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME! I'VE GOT A PLAN...

WANDA REMEMBERED HOW DON'D OUTLINED HIS PLAN...

NO ONE WILL SUSPECT FOUL PLAY, BABY! THERE IS NO MOTIVE! NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT US!

BUT, DON! THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT TO BE SO CAREFUL...

EXACTLY! THAT'S WHY I CAN'T COME UP TOMORROW WHEN MILT'S AWAY! WE'VE GOT TO WAIT, BABY! WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE CHANCES!

BUT... DON! WE'VE WAITED... ALL THESE MONTHS... WHILE YOU WERE GONE!

WE CAN WAIT JUST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, WANDA, HONEY! JUST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER...

HOLD ME... KISS ME...



HAD MILTON REALLY KNOWN? HAD HE SUSPECTED? WANDA COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THEY'D BEEN SO CAREFUL! ASIDE FROM THOSE BRIEF STOLEN SECONDS ALONE, THEY'D BEHAVED LIKE STRANGERS...

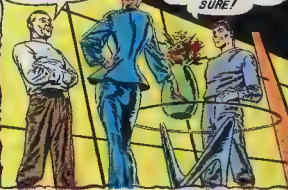
WANDA! I HAVE AN EXCELLENT IDEA! WHY DON'T YOU COME ALONG WITH ME WHEN I GO TO EXAMINE DON'S DISCOVERY?

GO ALONG, MILT? WHY... WHY, WOULDN'T I BE IN THE WAY?



NONSENSE! WANDA WOULDN'T BE IN THE WAY, WOULD SHE, CONRAD?

OF COURSE NOT, MILT. YOU COME ALONG, MRS. GRIFFITH. YOU'LL ENJOY THE TRIP, I'M SURE!



HAD MILTON HAD AN ULTIMOR MOTIVE IN INVITING WANDA ON THE TRIP? HAD HE FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR PLAN TO KILL HIM?

WHY DID YOU DO THAT? WHY DID YOU SAY 'YES' TO MY COMING ALONG?

IT'S A LONG TRIP HOME, BABY! A LONG TRIP...



WANDA REMEMBERED THE EXCITEMENT... THE ANTICIPATION! NOT OF THE TRIP TO THE PLANETOID... THAT WOULD BE SHEER TORTURE! BUT THE TRIP HOME WITH MILT DEAD... AND SHE AND DON... TOGETHER...

OF COURSE, IF YOU'D RATHER NOT GO, WANDA...

DON'T BE SILLY, MILT. I WANT TO GO!

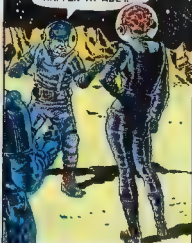


MILTON'S LAUGH, ECHOING INSIDE WANDA'S SPACE-HELMET, SHOCKED HER OUT OF HER REVERIE...SHOCKED HER BACK TO THE BARREN ROCKY PLANETOID...

YES, WANDA. I KNEW I'D LOST YOU. THAT'S WHY I CAME! I WANTED TO DIE. THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME WITHOUT YOU...



AND YOU'RE *WRONG*, WANDA! AFTER I'M DEAD, YOU'RE *NOT* GOING BACK TO THE SHIP, YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO GET WHAT YOU WANT. THAT'S NOT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AT ALL...



MILT POINTED TO A SWITCH ON HIS SPACE-SUIT BELT-RADIO...

IF I PRESS THIS TOGGLE, THE SHIP'S AUTOMATIC PILOT WILL TAKE IT OFF...AND YOU'LL BE LEFT...STRANDED HERE BOTH OF YOU...



...AND THERE ISN'T ANY *ATMOSPHERE* ON THIS PLANETOID; SO THERE ISN'T ANY *AIR PRESSURE!*

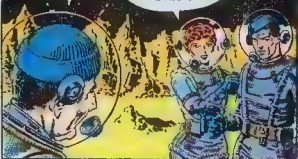


MILT GRINNED...

SO GO AHEAD, DON! PULL THE TRIGGER! KILL ME! SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

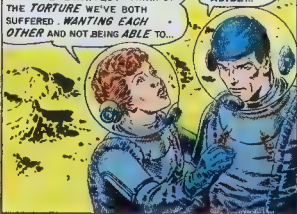
HE'S LYING, DON! HOW COULD HE HAVE KNOWN? HE'S TRYING TO OUTSMART US!

I DON'T KNOW, BABY...



DON... DON, DARLING! THINK OF THAT TRIP HOME! THINK OF HOW LONG WE'VE WAITED! THINK OF THE TORTURE WE'VE BOTH SUFFERED. WANTING EACH OTHER AND NOT BEING ABLE TO...

OKAY, BABY! OKAY! STAND ASIDE...



DON RAISED HIS GUN. HIS GLOVED FIST TIGHTENED. THERE WAS A SHARP CLICK AS HE PULLED THE TRIGGER...



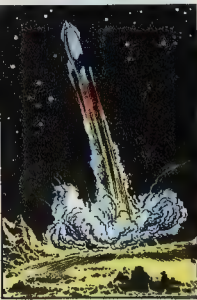
MILT PITCHED FORWARD, THE AIR HISsing FROM HIS RENT SPACE-SUIT, FOUNTAINING HIS BLOOD ACROSS THE ROCKY PLANETOID SURFACE. . .



AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE DIS-TANT SHIP SHUDDERED... SPITTING FLAME. . .



... AND SHOT SKYWARD... UP INTO THE BLACK STAR-STUDDED VOID..



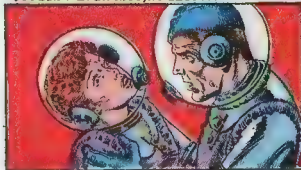
FOR A LONG WHILE, THE MAN AND THE WOMAN JUST STOOD THERE, STARING AFTER THE FADING NEEDLE OF FIRE. . .



THEN THEY LOOKED AT THE BODY LYING ON THE PEB-BLES WITH THE BLOATED RUPTURED FACE THAT SEEMED TO GRIN BACK AT THEM...



AND THEN THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER *HUNGRI*L, AND KNEW THAT WHAT THEY'D *KILLED* FOR WAS NOW *IMPOSSIBLE*... THAT THEY WERE *CONFINED* TO THEIR *SUITS*... THAT IF THEY TRIED TO *REMOVE* THEM, THEIR BODIES WOULD *BLOAT* AND *BLISTER* AND THEIR *BLOOD VESSELS* WOULD *RUPTURE*... THAT THEY *COULDN'T* EVEN *KISS*, NO LESS. . .



AND WHEN THE OTHER SPACE EXPLORERS FINALLY CAME TO THE TINY PEBBLED PLANETOID, THEY FOUND THE MAN AND THE WOMAN SITTING BESIDE EACH OTHER... DEAD FROM SUFFOCATION AND STARVATION... HOLDING BLOATED RUPTURED HANDS...



...THREE'S a CROWD

DELLA HAD BEEN ACTING *STRANGELY* LATELY... COLD TO MY *ADVANCES*. I'D *SENSED* SOMETHING WAS WRONG, BUT I JUST COULDN'T PUT MY *FINGER* ON IT. WHEN SHE'D SUGGESTED GOING UP TO THE *LODGE* FOR THE WEEK-END, I'D *JUMPED* AT THE CHANCE. I'D FELT THAT THE *TWO* OF US, *ALONE* UP THERE, COULD *STRAIGHTEN OUT* WHATEVER HAD COME BETWEEN US. BUT THEN SHE'D GONE TO THE *PHONE* AND CALLED *ANDY* AND INVITED *HIM UP, TOO...*

YES, ANDY. *THIS WEEK-END*. JUST THE *THREE* OF US. YES.

YOUR CAR? WELL, IF YOU *INSIST*. GOOD. SEE YOU *FRIDAY NIGHT*. THEN, *YOU'LL PICK US UP!*

FINE! 'BYE, DEAR!

DELLA, WHAT'D YOU GO AND DO *THAT* FOR?



DELLA HUNG UP AND TURNED TO ME INNOCENTLY...

DO WHAT, ALAN?

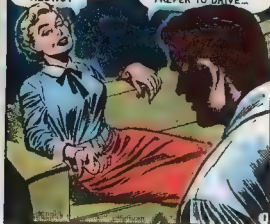
INVITE *ANDY* UP! I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE NICE IF WE WENT UP TO THE *LODGE ALONE*... JUST THE *TWO* OF US...



SHE LAUGHED...

AREN'T WE A LITTLE *OLD* FOR *THAT* KIND OF THING, ALAN? BESIDES, *ANDY* IS OUR *BEST FRIEND*. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE *NICE* TO HAVE HIM *ALONG*.

VERY *COZY!* AND WHAT'S THIS ABOUT *HIM PICKING US UP?* YOU *KNOW* HOW DANGEROUS THOSE *ROADS* ARE. I PREFER TO *DRIVE*...



ANDY HAS A NEW CAR, ALAN. HE WANTS TO SHOW IT OFF. I COULDN'T VERY WELL REFUSE HIM.

NO! NOT VERY WELL...

I GUESS I ACTED PRETTY *CHILDISH* ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, BUT, QUITE FRANKLY, I WAS *ANNOYED*. OUR *ANNIVERSARY* WAS COMING UP THAT SUNDAY, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE *PERFECT* CHANCE TO CLEAN THE AIR OF WHATEVER IT WAS THAT WAS *BOTHERING* DELLA. BUT SHE'D GONE AND INVITED ANDY, AND *SPOILED* THE WHOLE DEAL. FRIDAY NIGHT, ANDY PULLED UP IN HIS BRAND NEW CONVERTIBLE.

OH, ANDY! IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

TOSS YOUR BAGS IN THE BACK AND HOP IN.

SWEET-LOOKING JOB, ANDY.

ALL THE WAY UP TO THE LODGE, ANDY RATTLED ON, PRAISING HIS NEW CAR. AND IT WAS A SWEET JOB! IT HAD POWER STEERING, POWER BRAKES, REMOTE-CONTROLLED WINDOWS THAT RAISED AND LOWERED AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON...

YES, SIR. SHE'S GOT EVERYTHING.

WHAT'S THAT, ANDY?

WHAT'S RINGING?

WE'D ALMOST REACHED THE ROAD LEADING TO THE LODGE AS THE BELL STARTED TO RING. ANDY SMILED, LOOKING AT HIS WATCH...

I SAVED THIS FOR THE *PIÈCE DE RÉISTANCE!* RIGHT ON TIME, TOO...

IT SOUNDS LIKE...

OH, NO!

ANDY REACHED UNDER THE DASH-BOARD AND LIFTED OUT THE RECEIVER...

YEP! A BUILT-IN-RADIO TELEPHONE. I LEFT ORDERS WITH MY SECRETARY TO CALL ME AT SEVEN! PARDON ME...

ANDY! YOU'RE CRAZY!

HELLO, HONEY! YES! ANY MESSAGES? OKAY. SEE YOU MONDAY MORNING! 'BYE!

WELL, I'LL BE...

ANDY HUNG UP. HE GRINNED AT US...

ALWAYS WANTED ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

WATCH IT, ANDY! RIGHT AFTER THIS BRIDGE, THE ROAD SWERVES UP A STEEP GRADE.

WE ZOOMED ACROSS THE BRIDGE AND THE CAR TOOK THE SHARP CURVE EASILY AND SPED UP THE STEEP MOUNTAIN ROAD...

YOU'LL HAVE TO WATCH THIS SPOT ON THE WAY BACK, ANDY. IT'S PRETTY DANGEROUS. YOU CAN'T SEE THE BRIDGE UNTIL YOU'RE ALMOST ON TOP OF IT!

ANDY, WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU NEED A TELEPHONE FOR?

YOU NEVER CAN TELL, DELLA. SOMEONE MIGHT WANT TO REACH ME...

ABOUT TEN MILES FURTHER ON, WE TURNED OFF THE MAIN HIGHWAY AND PULLED UP TO THE LODGE. ANDY WAS STILL BRAGGING ABOUT THE CAR-TELEPHONE...

I'LL GIVE YOU THE NUMBER, ALAN, SOON AS WE GET INSIDE. YOU WRITE IT DOWN...

FINE, ANDY! NOW, YOU AND DELLA GO ON IN AND I'LL GET YOUR BAGS OUT OF THE TRUNK!

NO!

DELLA TURNED WHITE. I LOOKED AT HER... THEN AT ANDY...

ER...MY BAGS ARE IN THE BACK SEAT, ALAN! THE TRUNK DOESN'T OPEN. IT'S... IT'S GOT THE RADIO-TELEPHONE CHASSIS IN THERE.

OH! I SEE...

THE COLOR CAME BACK INTO DELLA'S CHEEKS AND SHE WENT ON INTO THE LODGE. I FELT A SUDDEN CHILL CREEP UP MY SPINE. HOW DID DELLA KNOW ABOUT THAT?...

I'LL HELP YOU WITH THE BAGS, ALAN!

HUH? OH, SURE...

DELLA AND I UNPACKED IN SILENCE. THAT GOLDNESS SHE'D SHOWN TOWARD ME LATELY...THOSE REJECTIONS OF MY AMOROUS ADVANCES. COULD IT BE...?

DELLA. I I

NOT NOW, ALAN! ANDY MUST BE STARVED. I'LL GO FIX SOMETHING FOR US!

SHE HURRIED OFF TO THE KITCHEN, LEAVING ME WITH MY DOUBTS AND MY UNCERTAINTIES AND A RISING TIDE OF MISTRUST AND SUSPICION. ANDY CAME IN AFTER A WHILE...

HERE'S MY CAR-PHONE NUMBER, ALAN. WHERE SHALL I PUT IT?

HUH? OH, JUST PUT IT DOWN ON THE BUREAU THERE, ANDY!

AFTER SUPPER, WE SAT AROUND AND MADE IDLE CHATTER...AND THEN DELLA ANNOUNCED...

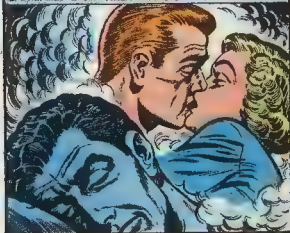
I THINK WE ALL OUGHT TO GET TO BED EARLY TONIGHT. TOMORROW, WE'LL GET THE BOAT OUT, AND DO SOME SAILING!

GOOD IDEA! I'M POOPED! G'NIGHT, YOU TWO!

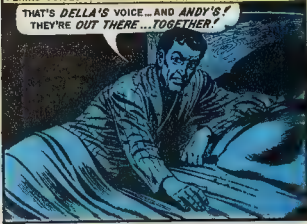
GOOD NIGHT, ANDY!



AFTER WE GOT TO BED, DELLA REFUSED ME AGAIN, AND I FINALLY DROPPED OFF INTO A FRETFUL SLEEP. I DREAMED I SAW ANDY AND DELLA...KISSING...



I WAS AWAKENED WITH A START ABOUT THREE IN THE MORNING BY THE SLAMMING OF A CAR-TRUNK. I SAT UP. THE BED BESIDE ME WAS EMPTY. THEN, I HEARD WHISPERING VOICES OUTSIDE...



THAT'S DELLA'S VOICE... AND ANDY'S! THEY'RE OUT THERE...TOGETHER!

I SLIPPED INTO A ROBE AND TIP-TOED OUT OF THE LODGE, DOWN THE TRAIL, THE DOOR TO THE GUEST COTTAGE CLOSED. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN, BUT THE LIGHTS WERE ON INSIDE...



I WAS RIGHT! THERE IS SOMETHING GOING ON BETWEEN THEM!

I MOVED TO THE GUEST COTTAGE SILENTLY... LISTENING. INSIDE, DELLA WAS LAUGHING SOFTLY, AND ANDY'S VOICE WAS WARM...



ALAN HAS NO IDEA, HAS HE... I MEAN... ABOUT WHAT WE'RE PLANNING?

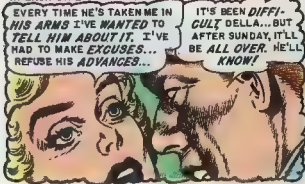
NO! IT'LL BE A COMPLETE SHOCK TO HIM WHEN HE FINDS OUT. DID YOU GET ME EVERYTHING I'LL NEED!

YER I BOUGHT EVERYTHING ON YOUR LIST. I SURE WAS EMBARRASSED BUYING THOSE DRESSES THOUGH.



WELL, I COULDN'T DO IT MYSELF! ALAN WOULD HAVE SUSPECTED THEN! OH, ANDY... WE'VE BOTH WANTED THIS SO BADLY... AND WE'VE WAITED SO LONG!

JEALOUSLY AND HATE TORE AT MY HEART, RIPPED TEARS FROM MY EYES, AND SENT THEM SPILLING DOWN MY CHEEKS. ANDY AND DELLA... MY BEST FRIEND... AND MY WIFE. I COULDN'T SEE IN THROUGH THE SHADED WINDOWS, BUT I COULD JUST IMAGINE THEM IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS...



EVERY TIME HE'S TAKEN ME IN HIS ARMS I'VE WANTED TO TELL HIM ABOUT IT. I'VE HAD TO MAKE EXCUSES... REFUSE HIS ADVANCES...

IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT, DELLA... BUT AFTER SUNDAY, IT'LL BE ALL OVER. HE'LL KNOW!

I STAGGERED FROM THE COTTAGE, AS I PASSED ANDY'S NEW CAR, I NOTICED THE TRUNK SLIGHTLY AJAR. I SWUNG IT OPEN, CURSING...

EMPTY! THEY LIED TO ME. THEY SAID THE PHONE CHASSIS WAS IN HERE. DELLA'S THINGS WERE IN HERE, THE THINGS ANDY BOUGHT HER! NEW DRESSES. PERHAPS A FUR COAT! NO! OH, LORD... NO!



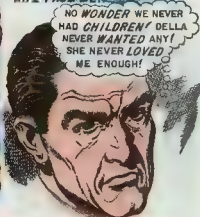
THEY WERE GOING TO RUN OFF TOGETHER. THEY'D BROUGHT ME UP TO THE LODGE TO TELL ME. NO WONDER DELLA WANTED ANDY ALONG. NO WONDER WE'D USED HIS CAR. THEY WERE GOING TO LAUGH... AND SAY...



AND THEN THEY WERE GOING TO DRIVE OFF AND LEAVE ME THERE... STRANDED...



SUDDENLY I HATED THEM. I HATED THEIR DECEPTION. I HATED DELLA FOR WHAT SHE'D DONE TO OUR MARRIAGE. I HATED ANDY FOR PRETENDING TO BE MY FRIEND. AND ALL THE WHILE TWISTING MY WIFE FROM ME.



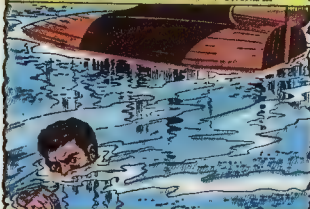
I LAY AWAKE FOR A LONG TIME, THE ANGER AND HURT INSIDE ME GROWING. THEN, DELLA AND ANDY CAME IN, WHISPERING SOFTLY, AND I HEARD THE RESOUNDING SOUND OF A KISS...



I FROZE AS SHE CRAWLED INTO BED BESIDE ME. AND I KNEW THAT I HAD TO KILL THEM. I LAY THERE AND I PLANNED IT. IN THE MORNING, WE WERE TO GO SAILING. IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE...

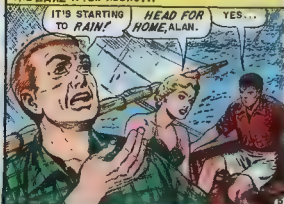


I WOULD KNOCK THEM BOTH UNCONSCIOUS, THEN CAPSIZE THE SAILBOAT AND SWIM TO SHORE...

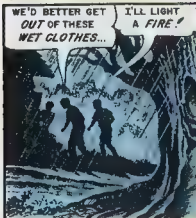


AND IT WOULD BE JUST AN UNFORTUNATE BOATING ACCIDENT!

BY MORNING I HAD MADE UP MY MIND TO GO THROUGH WITH MY PLAN. BUT SOMEHOW I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO DO IT. AND AFTER WE'D BEEN OUT ON THE LAKE A FEW HOURS...



THE STORM SEEMED TO COME UP SUDDENLY. I PRAYED THE BOAT WOULD CAPSIZE BY ITSELF, BUT WE MADE IT BACK TO THE LODGE SAFELY. WE ARRIVED CHILLED AND SOAKED TO THE SKIN...



WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF THESE WET CLOTHES...

I'LL LIGHT A FIRE!

ALL AFTERNOON, THE STORM RAGED. TOWARD EVENING, IT SUBSIDED. THE PHONE RANG AND I ANSWERED IT...

HELLO? JUST WANTED TO WARN YOU FOLKS THAT THE BRIDGE DOWN THE ROAD IS WASHED OUT, SO DON'T TRY TO COME INTO TOWN TOMORROW.



THE BRIDGE... THE BRIDGE AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT DANGEROUS GRADE... THE BRIDGE THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE TILL YOU WERE ALMOST UPON IT... HAD BEEN WASHED AWAY...



WHO WAS IT, ALAN?

NO ONE, DELLA! JUST A WRONG NUMBER!

A PLAN WAS FORMING IN MY MIND. A DEATH-PLAN...

I USUALLY DRIVE INTO TOWN ON SUNDAYS TO GET FRESH ROLLS FOR BREAKFAST, ANDY! OF COURSE, I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO LET ME USE YOUR NEW CAR...

OH THAT'S ALL RIGHT, ALAN! I'LL BE GLAD TO GO IN.



ANDY'D FALLEN FOR IT. DELLA WAS NEXT...

HE WON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO, DELLA. WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE IN WITH ANDY?

OF COURSE, DEAR. WE'LL MAKE IT EARLY, ANDY... ABOUT EIGHT!



IT WAS DONE. THE BRIDGE WAS WASHED OUT. THEY'D COME DOWN THE GRADE AND SEE IT AND IT WOULD BE TOO LATE...



THAT NIGHT, DELLA AND ANDY WENT DOWN TO THE GUEST COTTAGE AGAIN AND RETURNED HOURS LATER. I PRETENDED I WAS ASLEEP. I FELT CHILLED AND MY THROAT FELT SORE. I WAS PROBABLY COMING DOWN WITH A COLD. IN THE MORNING, I HEARD ANDY'S KNOCK...



READY TO GO INTO TOWN, DELLA?

READY IN A MINUTE, ANDY!

DELLA DRESSED QUICKLY. I SWALLOWED THE LUMP IN MY THROAT AND LISTENED TO THEM LEAVE THE LODGE.



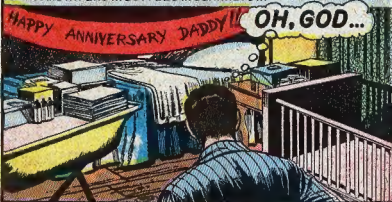
THEN I GOT UP. I DASHED TO THE DOOR, AND WATCHED THEM ZOOM AWAY...



A MORBID CURIOSITY DREW ME TO THE GUEST COTTAGE. I WANTED TO SEE THE SCENE...THE RUMPLED BED...THE PACKED SUITCASES WITH DELLA'S NEW THINGS THAT ANDY'D BOUGHT. I KICKED OPEN THE DOOR ANGRILY...



THE COTTAGE WAS CHEERFULLY DECORATED. A COLORFUL SIGN GREETED ME. A BATHINET STOOD IN ONE CORNER...A NEW CRIB IN THE OTHER. A COMPLETE LAYETTE WAS SPREAD OUT ON THE TABLE BESIDE THE BOX OF CIGARS. MATERNITY DRESSES LAY ON THE BED. LITTLE KNITTED THINGS...DIAPERS...BOTTLES...BLANKETS...



THAT'S WHY SHE HAD BEEN GOLD TO ME. DELLA WAS GOING TO HAVE A BABY! SHE WANTED TO SURPRISE ME. ANDY HAD THESE THINGS IN THE TRUNK. OH, GOD... AND I THOUGHT...I...I SENT THEM TO THEIR DEATHS...



I TORE INTO THE HOUSE. THERE WAS ONE CHANGE TO STOP THEM. ONE SLIM CHANGE...



I FOUND THE CAR-PHONE NUMBER ON THE BUREAU WHERE ANDY'D LEFT IT. I STUMBLED TO THE PHONE. I LIFTED THE RECEIVER...



I OPENED MY MOUTH. I TRIED TO SPEAK. NOTHING CAME OUT. NOT A SOUND...



I HAD COME DOWN THAT NIGHT WITH A BAD CASE OF LARYNGITIS!
-THE END-

They claim

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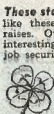


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<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial
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<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering
<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering
<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Supervision
<input type="checkbox"/> Foremanship
<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting
<input type="checkbox"/> Machine Design-Drafting
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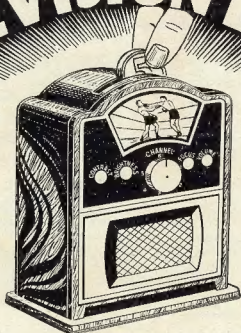
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IT'S A MONEY—IN EVERY DETAIL! You'll be the envy of all your friends with grand new Television Bank! A console model, it's an exact miniature of the most expensive sets. Complete even to the handsomely painted-on speaker grille and dials. All metal ruggedly built bank, 4 1/4" x 4", has smart mahogany finish. Automatic screen light powered by efficient, replaceable battery. GUARANTEED TO DELIGHT YOU, bank comes complete with bulb, battery and strong key for opening and emptying out your wealth of savings.

**BE THE FIRST IN YOUR CROWD TO HAVE THIS WONDERFUL
NEW TELEVISION BANK! SEND NO MONEY! ORDER YOURS TODAY!**

NEWEST DECORATOR'S NOTE TO ALL DOLL HOUSE OWNERS!

Nothing is so truly luxurious for the modern doll house! This beautiful new Television Bank is the last work in elegance—matches all styles of furniture—makes a stunning addition to your dolls' living room! You'll love it, and so will all your friends!

SEAGEE CO., 2 Allen St., Dept. EC-2 New York 2, N. Y.

SEAGEE CO., Dept. EC-2
2 Allen Street, New York 2, N. Y.

Please rush me my TELEVISION BANK. I agree to pay postman \$1.98 plus few cents postage with understanding that if I am not delighted I may return bank in 5 days for full refund of purchase price.

Name _____ (Please P. int. Plainly)

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

☐ I enclose \$2.00. You pay postage. Same money-back guarantee.

MEN! WOMEN! take orders for famous NYLONS GUARANTEED 9 mos.

ONLY YOUR
SPARE
TIME
NEEDED

Look At These Exceptional FIRST WEEK SPARE TIME EARNINGS

Space permits mentioning only these few exceptional cases, but they give you an idea of the BIG MONEY that is possible in just spare time starting the very first week.

Mr. Richard Peters, Penna.
\$63.94 first week spare time
Mrs. Virgil Hickman, Tenn.
\$74.97 first week spare time
Mr. Henry O'Rourke, Vermont
\$58.80 first week spare time
Mrs. J. A. Sievers, Fla.
\$85.14 first week spare time
Mr. Anthony Avrilla, Wash.
\$135.00 first week spare time
Mrs. Agnes Michaels, Ind.
\$54.18 first week spare time
Mr. Russell P. Hart, New York
\$53.30 first week spare time

Mrs. W. B. Foss, S. Dak.
\$40.47 first week spare time
Mr. A. E. Lawson, Ga.
\$52.26 first week spare time
Mrs. Emery Shoots, Wyo.
\$48.69 first week spare time
Mr. J. Hillman Jr., Ohio
\$48.72 first week spare time
Mrs. John Gorman, Conn.
\$71.54 first week spare time
Mr. W. Riley, Ill.
\$72.72 first week spare time
Miss Frances Freeman, Texas
\$62.73 first week spare time



A CAR IN 4 MONTHS—AND UP TO \$20 IN A HALF DAY

"I cannot express my thrill upon receiving this beautiful new Chevrolet. I was a bit doubtful at first but now it is a reality and I thank you for making it so. I have earned this car in just four short months and I'm sure others can do the same. Thank you for making it possible for me to earn more money than ever before. I have earned as much as twenty dollars for one half day and my bonus alone for one month was \$125.00." —Mrs. E. A. Conway

NEW CAR GIVEN—OR IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A CAR YOU CAN GET A NEW ONE ON OUR "TRADE-IN" PLAN

WIL-KNIT actually gives new Fords, Plymouths or Chevrolets to producers as a bonus in addition to your regular earnings. It is yours. Or if you now have a car, you can get a new one even quicker under our "trade-in" plan without paying a penny. Get the facts TODAY.

NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING REQUIRED

Our unusual plan is a sure-fire money maker! Sensational Guarantee is creating a tremendous demand for Wil-Knit Nylons! Mrs. Nellie Gail of Iowa started out with me and made \$48.89 the very first week in just her spare hours. Mrs. Agnes McCall, of South Carolina, did even better. Her spare time in her very first week brought her earnings of \$35.56. Mrs. Walter Simmons of New York turned her spare time into earnings of \$92.83 her first week out. THESE EXCEPTIONAL EARNINGS FOR JUST SPARE TIME and in the very first week give you an idea of the possibilities!

GUARANTEED AGAINST RUNS, WEAR AND EVEN SNAGS!

Why is it so easy for Wil-Knit Salespeople to get orders? I'll tell you — It's because we stand back of Wil-Knit Nylons with the most amazing guarantee you have ever heard of. Your customers can wear out their hose. They can develop runs. They can even snag them. No matter what happens to make Wil-Knit Nylons unwearable... within 9 months, depending on quantity... we replace them free of charge under terms of our guarantee. No wonder women are anxious to buy Wil-Knit! And no wonder it is easy to quickly build up a fine and STEADY year around income. Earnings start immediately. Look at these exceptional figures—Lillian A. Bronson of Georgia made \$80.80 first week spare time. Ethel Cameron of Michigan, \$64.14. Sabine Fisher, New York, reports earnings of \$70.10 under our unusual plan just for spare time in her first week. Mrs. Edward Leo of Minn., in writing to thank us for the new Plymouth she received, also reports: "I actually earned \$12.00 in twenty minutes by the clock. I actually couldn't believe I earned that much until I re-checked my figures."

SEND NO MONEY! JUST NAME AND HOSE SIZE...

SIMPLY MAIL COUPON. When you send for Selling Outfit, I also send your choice of Nylons or Socks for your personal use. Just rush your name for the facts about the most sensational line of hosiery for men, women and children ever offered. Your friends and neighbors will admire you and this unusual selection of most beautiful hosiery! Just mail coupon or postal card now, and learn at once how you, too, can earn big money in FULL or SPARE TIME and qualify for an EXTRA BONUS and a New Car over and above your cash earnings.

L. Lowell Wilkin

WIL-KNIT HOSIERY CO., Inc., A-6138 Midway, Greenfield, Ohio

L. Lowell Wilkin, WIL-KNIT HOSIERY CO., Inc.
A-6138 Midway, GREENFIELD, OHIO

Be Sure to Send
Hose Size

Please rush all facts about your guaranteed hosiery money-making plan and NEW CAR offer. Everything you send me now is FREE.

MY HOSE SIZE IS _____ MY AGE IS _____ YEARS

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____